

hands on

Stories, ideas, & news
you can use
From Kids Friendly



Surprising Journeys

ISSUE 9: Sept '07

I recently had a call from a minister of one of the first churches to become Kids Friendly. When this church contracted to become Kids Friendly there were three children attending Sunday worship, despite an active community centre running on the church property. The minister (recently called), believed emphatically that children are vital to a healthy worshipping community. She also knew that this church would need to invest in a children's worker if it was going to attract and keep children. We worked together to employ a young member of the congregation to love and lead the children of this community. Within three months there were 15 children regularly coming to church. Eighteen months after becoming a "Kids Friendly" church the minister phoned me to say "We have a problem." "What's that?" I asked with trepidation. "We have too many children" she answered, "we need to plan where to from here?" That's the kind of problem we'd all like to have. So what's the secret of their success? I'm not certain there is an infallible formula to successful children's ministry, but these are some of the factors I believe led to success for this church:

WA minister who believed that children should be fully included and catered for in the first half of the worship service.

WA children's worker who had grown up in that church and who had a heart for its people.

WA directive to the children's worker to love and serve kids without worrying about numbers.

WInvolving the children's worker in children's community outreach programmes.

WEffective marketing and communication of the church's Kids Friendly commitment and activities.
WRegular planning meetings involving the minister and children's worker.

WIntentional valuing and affirming of the children's worker by the church leadership.

WA commitment by the leaders of the church (session) to take responsibility for children's ministry by getting to know the names of three children and something about them and talking to them whenever the opportunity arose.

WSupport and trust for the minister's vision for children in the church.

Kids Friendly is a journey not a destination and like all journeys there are surprises and challenges along the way. When you become a Kids Friendly church you need to expect surprises and effectively respond to them. One church I work with found that their intentional ministry to children resulted in so many children coming to church that they couldn't fit them in. They had to move their children's programme to a larger church in their parish - an unexpected surprise and challenge for that congregation. Another church found that their investment in children's ministry resulted in lots of intermediate kids needing a programme two years down the road. I'm always telling churches lamenting the lack of youth, "become Kids Friendly and before you know it you will have youth". So brace yourself for an adventurous journey.

Blessings. Jill

Kids Friendly plants seeds across NZ



11 passionate Kids Friendly champions from all over New Zealand participate in the first Kids Friendly Coaching Clinic held in St Heliers, Auckland from 14-16 September for a weekend of learning, laughter and fellowship. Participants learnt about Kids Friendly, its resources and coaching processes, as well as exploring effective ways to facilitate change and new ways of being and doing church. We began our time together with each of us filling a pot with fertile soil to symbolise our commitment to open our souls to receive seeds of possibilities. In closing on Sunday we planted seeds in our pots and prayed that God's light and love germinate them according to His will and time. Lorraine Morgan reported that by Monday morning she could feel the effects of the southern Canterbury sun warming her seeds. And we walked in the bush, picnicked in the park, explored one of Auckland's loveliest spots,

made new friends and enjoyed the wonderful hospitality of St Heliers Presbyterian Church. Thanks to all those who contributed to make it such a memorable event.



Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand

Connecting with Communities

A common question I ask at my first Kids Friendly coaching meeting with a church is: "Who is your community?" Not always an easy question to answer but a vital one for churches committed to reaching out and serving their communities. When exploring the needs of its community, Pohutukawa Coast Presbyterian Church in South Auckland discovered that many single parent families were living in their suburb. In seeking to serve these families they planned a candle lit dinner for single parents in their church lounge while the children were entertained and fed in the hall. "It was a wonderful way to serve our community" said Lu Clark, "and we hope it reflected the unconditional love of Jesus." Our churches reach out to their communities in many creative ways.

St John's in the City, Wellington invites its community to an annual "Starlight Story Express"

extravaganza. The event is held on a dark winter evening to add atmosphere to the candle lit church. Children come in their pj's and move from station to station hearing lots of lovely stories, followed by hot chocolate and cookies before returning home to bed. Research tells us that people look to their local churches to provide childcare and this gives us a wonderful opportunity to love and serve the kids of our community. Mangapapa Union in Gisborne runs a fun holiday programme for children each holidays. Says Coralie

Hockey, children's ministry leader: We had a fabulous time during the July holidays running a 4 day holiday programme. 75-100 kids came each day, half of them from non-church backgrounds, many of them responding to a salvation message and a few coming along to our Sunday school. The 11-14 year olds from our church were wonderful team leaders and really enjoyed themselves.



Kids in Mission

I love the back of the Highgate Kids Friendly sign facing you as you leave the church. It reads: "you are now entering the mission field". How many of us still think of missionaries as those people who sacrifice their home comforts to help the poor and needy in places with unpronounceable names. It's great that we involve our kids in praying for and supporting these selfless agents of God, but let's also empower the children of our churches to be missionaries in their own communities. When you're planning your children's ministry consider how you intentionally provide opportunity for local and global mission. If it's not programmed in, it's likely to get overlooked.

St Margaret's Silverstream children, leaders, parents and Mac, the Great Dane, annually visit the Heretaunga Retirement Village in Silverstream, Upper Hutt. "Everyone is special was the theme of our entertainment for the residents. We shared songs about animals and people, talked about how we care for pets, and how God cares for us," says family worker, Patricia Lerwill. "The children gave out 'Have a Happy Day' cards which they had made. One child asked, 'When can we go again?', and a resident said, 'I loved the card as I was feeling sad because my sister died this week'. This annual event has become important for us all."



**YOU ARE NOW ENTERING
THE MISSION FIELD**

Kids Friendly Legends



Mike Leopard has become a legend in the two years he has been leading Kids' Church at St Andrews Waipukurau. Mike (22) joined St Andrew's as Children's Worker in 2005 after working 4 years at Camp David Adventure Centre in the Hawkes Bay. He says: "I have just fallen across some of our successes rather than having to do a whole lot of hard work." And successful is exactly what his ministry is. "When I started in May 2005, we had about 20-30 kids attending Kids Church. On my first Sunday 12 turned up, which was a little disheartening, but now we have an average of 45-70 kids coming each Sunday. I am so excited about growing a Kids Church that's introducing kids to a God who loves them more than anyone else."

Mike says the age of participants at Kids' Church (9+) allows him to teach in ways he knows best, namely through lots of active fun including skits, games and songs to teach relevant messages. "Our programme really appeals to intermediate kids who think Kids' Church is cool and who role model positive fun to the younger kids. For many of our

children, Kids' Church is the best part of their week, which always blows me away and reminds me that the effort is worth it."

Mike has a great team of leaders ranging from 14 to 36. He stresses the importance of positive relationships between leaders and kids and between kids and their peers. "Relationship is everything to kids" says Mike. "Kids stick with it, for it, through it, if they have good relationships with people there."

In addition to Kids' Church on Sunday, Mike organises events and activities to build positive relationships including sleep overs, camps and adventure day trips to the snow, bush or beach. "Trips keep the kids interested and it's a great way to involve other people in our church and encourage intergenerational relationships."

If you'd like to contact Mike to find out more about his ministry or tap into his many creative resources email him at: mikeleopard007@hotmail.com.

In my role I get to meet lots of inspiring people and Sue Ellis, children's pastor at St Columba, Botany is my latest inspirational find. In her 20 years as a Salvation Army Major, Sue planted churches and developed community outreach programmes that changed the lives of thousands. She brings this experience and a wonderful wisdom and sense of humour to her role at St Columba.

Says Sue: "I have finally landed my dream job. Not only do I get to impact children's lives with the love of Christ, but I work with the most amazing and inspiring team committed to serving our community. It's an awesome privilege to have my role."



A Kids Friendly Welcome

In recognising the improbability of busy door duty people getting down to a child's level to welcome him by name to church, Kids Friendly churches all over the country have set up children's welcome tables in their entrances. Decorated and "manned" by a leader and child helper, these tables are places for children to sign in, be welcomed by name, receive a welcome pack if they are new and maybe even a prize for regular attendance. "Our children loved preparing the table," says Pam Thrupp of St Columba Taradale, "and it's a great way to get the admin out of the way while ensuring children are welcomed by name." To find out more about setting up a Kids Friendly welcome table refer to the resource "A Kids Friendly Sunday" in your manual or email jill@sthelierschurch.org.nz.



Sharing Communion with our Kids

When a church decides that children are full members of the faith community and therefore should be invited to share in the communion meal, they need to consider ways to educate, engage and involve children. East Taeiri, Dunedin decided not only to invite children to participate in communion, but to involve them in the preparation of the communion meal, resulting in a meaningful and powerful communion service for all.

St Heliers, Auckland has a child worship assistant to help the minister and elders prepare and serve communion.

Many churches still struggle with communicating the meaning of communion to children.

Kaikorai, Dunedin wrote a communion play that their minister Ian Guy led with leaders over two weeks preceding communion.

St John's in the City, Wellington has developed a quiz to familiarise their children with communion.

Tahunanui's (Nelson) minister John Malcolm developed a PowerPoint to explain communion to their kids.

When I was leading "Godzone" my church's Sunday School recently, I decided to remind kids of the

meaning and process of communion before we returned to the church to share in the sacrament.

The lesson consisted of a game of hangman to

guess what special thing we were doing in church that involved bread and wine.

I was appalled at how long it took the kids to guess the word

COMMUNION. A PowerPoint quiz confirmed my worst

suspicions that the children had little or

No knowledge of what communion is or why we enact this ritual.

To receive copies of any of the above resources email

jill@sthelierschurch.org.nz



Wonderful Websites

WWW.

formingfaith.com

funandgames.org

genesis.mb.ca

Puppetresources.com



If you have a Kids Friendly promotional DVD that you no longer require please return it to the Kids Friendly office at 100 St Heliers Bay Road, Auckland. We had 60 made and all are out at the moment. We're glad you like it but we'd love to share it with others. Thanks. Jill

Contact Kids Friendly:

Jill Kayser

Kids Friendly Coach

Jill@sthelierschurch.org.nz

Phone: 09-585 0959

Mobile: 027-2103784

Fax: 09-575 4827

100 St Heliers Bay Rd,

St Heliers, Auckland 1071



Kids Friendly is made possible by our generous funders. Our sincere thanks to core funders Presbyterian Savings and Development Society and Presbyterian Foundation. Thanks also to Dunedin, Auckland and Wellington Presbyteries for your valued donations.

